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**Thomas Unveils Online Purchasing Network****(Thomas Publishing introduces ConnectsUs electronic corporate purchasing network for industrial products)**

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**ABSTRACT:**

Thomas Publishing Company has introduced the ConnectsUs electronic corporate purchasing network for industrial products that is designed to streamline the corporate purchasing process. Targeted to provide up-to-the-minute information on maintenance, repair, and operations products, ConnectsUs is a state-of-the-art product that gives new definition to the term 'electronic commerce,' according to Anna Mickiewicz, president, Electronic Purchasing Information Corporation (EPIC), an affiliate of Thomas Publishing. The Windows-based ConnectsUs allows buyers to research and compare products, negotiate prices, enter orders, and make purchases on line with a purchasing card number via the system's link to electronic data interchange (EDI) standards. Buyers and suppliers can subscribe to ConnectsUs for a monthly subscription fee and a one-time software license fee.

**TEXT:**

Eases Product Sourcing And Ordering Through EDI

By Diane Trommer

New York -- Thomas Publishing Company has introduced ConnectsUs, an electronic corporate purchasing network for industrial products designed to streamline the corporate purchasing process. Targeted to provide up-to-the-minute information on maintenance, repair, and operations products, ConnectsUs is a "state-of-the-art product which gives new definition to the term 'electronic commerce,'" said Anna Mickiewicz, president of Electronic Purchasing Information Corporation (EPIC), an affiliate company of Thomas Publishing.

"The purchasing manager can really re-engineer the procurement department with this tool, because it enables them to sit at their desk and on line look at some subset of the 150,000 suppliers and their products currently listed on the Thomas Register database," Mickiewicz explained. "So they might narrow their choice down to three to five different suppliers of a particular product and, based on the comparison done on line as well as any additional information they may require from the seller, they can facilitate their special negotiated prices."

ConnectsUs is a Windows-based application designed to enable buyers to research and compare products, negotiate prices, enter orders, and make purchases on line with a purchasing card number via the system's link to electronic data interchange (EDI) standards.

Using the Thomas Register database as a foundation, ConnectsUs takes the information one step further, Mickiewicz said. "Thomas Register has over 150,000 suppliers today, but if you are a corporate purchasing manager, what Thomas won't tell you is all the different variations of a company's product line. ConnectsUs will give access to all types of varieties of products that the buyer is able to see right on line."

For example, the first company to sign on to the network is 3M Products. 3M has some 60,000 different products, so if the buyer looks in Thomas Register he will find 3M, but he will not find these thousands of different items.

The other difference is that once a buyer goes on line and finds a vendor and does his comparison shopping and selects a number of product he would like to purchase, he can create what Mickiewicz calls a "shopping list" so the buyer can buy products from various suppliers all with the click of one "purchase" button. An EDI record will automatically be sent to all those suppliers and confirmation will be sent back to the buyer's mailbox.

In addition, buyers can download specific products from their preferred vendors with negotiated prices into a private catalog, and end users in that company can sit at their desks and order from approved suppliers approved products at negotiated prices, Mickiewicz said.

"EPIC is Thomas' gateway to the electronic publishing arena, and for the first time gives buyers the ability to not only select products, but also to transact their purchases on line," said Jose E. Andrade, chairman of Thomas Publishing, New York. The transaction aspect of the network is made possible by an alliance with GE Information Services.

Suppliers also benefit from the network, which gives them the opportunity to showcase a wider number of their products to their target markets, according to Mickiewicz. The network currently has the capability of 50,000 product classifications, allowing suppliers to continually add to their listing and to update information more cost-effectively, she added.

Buyers and suppliers can subscribe to ConnectsUs for a monthly subscription fee and a one-time software license fee. Additional charges for private catalogs and volume-based fees for supplier listings are also required.

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COMPANY NAMES: THOMAS PUBLISHING CO

INDUSTRY NAMES: Applications software; Information industry; Software; Telecom services; Telecommunications

PRODUCT NAMES: Data communications services (481317); Business software packages NEC (737275)

CONCEPT TERMS: All product and service information; Product introduction

GEOGRAPHIC NAMES: North America (NOAX); United States (USA)

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